

# ON THE POETICAL TALENT OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS.: ELEGIE. TRANSLATION.

Godey's Lady's Book, and Ladies' American Magazine (1840-1843); Nov 1840; 21, American Periodicals  
pg. 216

For the Lady's Book.

## ON THE POETICAL TALENT OF MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS.

[From Professor Walter's new work, "The Twenty Years' Captivity of Mary Stuart."]

No care was wanting to give to the young Queen of Scots the most finished education. The quietude of the royal convent of St. Germain-en-Laye formed a contrast to the bustle and gaieties of the court, favourable at once to her studies, and to the culture of her heart. Among other accomplishments, that of Poetry was not neglected, and proofs have reached us that the natural turn of her genius was favourable to the lessons of taste instilled into her youthful mind. On the 24th of April, 1558, Mary was married to Francis, the Dauphin of France, and on the 10th of December 1560, she was a youthful widow mourning his untimely end, having shared with him a transitory reign of but seventeen months. She lamented his loss in an Elegy which does honour at once to her head and her heart.

### ELEGIE.

Ah! mon triste et doux chant  
D'un ton fort lamentable!  
Je jette un œil tranchant  
A ma perte incomparable;  
Et en soupirs cuisans  
Passe mes meilleurs ans!

Fut-il un tel malheur  
De dure destinée,  
Ni si triste douleur  
De Dame Fortunée,  
Qui mon cœur et mon œil  
Voit en biers et cercueil?

Qui en mon doux printemps,  
E fleur de ma jeunesse,  
Toutes les peines sens  
D'une extrême tristesse:  
Et en rien n'ai plaisir  
Qu'en regret et désir.

Ce que m'étoit plaisant,  
Or m'est peine dure;  
Le jour le plus luisant  
M'est nuit noire et obscure;  
Il n'est rien de si exquis  
Qui de moi soit requis.

### TRANSLATION.

How sad my plaintive numbers flow  
From lips that vainly would repine!  
Around my tearful eyes I throw,  
And see what countless loss is mine;  
In midst of burning sighs and tears  
I pass the fairest of my years!

Did destiny's hard hand before  
Such store of bitter sorrows shed;  
Or fortune, in her anger, pour  
Such griefs on hapless woman's head;  
Who sees her very heart lie here,  
Her eyes' sole pride, within this bier!

In the sweet springtide of my day,  
When flowers of early joy are ripe,  
I feel the withering griefs that prey  
Upon the closing hours of life;  
In nothing does my heart feel pleasure,  
Save in regrets that know no measure.

The fond delights of happier years  
Are turn'd to pain, and wound the sight;  
The day whose genial lustre cheers,  
Now wears the gloom of saddest night:  
Nor is there aught of good or fair  
That now can claim my thought or care.

J'ai au cœur et à l'œil  
Un portrait et image,  
Qui figure mon douil,  
Et mon pâle visage,  
Des violettes teint,  
Qui est l'amoureux teint.

Pour mon ma, étranger,  
Je ne m'arrête en place,  
Mais j'en ai beau changer  
Ma douleur ne s'efface ;  
Car mon pis, et mon mieux,  
Sont les plus deserts lieux.

Si en quelque séjour,  
Soit en bois, ou en pré,  
Soit vers l'aube du jour,  
Ou soit sur la vèpre,  
Sans cesse mon cœur sent,  
Le regret d'un absent.

Si parfois vers les cieux  
Viens à dresser ma vue,  
Le doux trait de ses yeux  
Je vois en une nue ;  
Soudain je le vois en l'eau,  
Comme dans son tombeau.

Si je suis en repos,  
Sommeillant sur ma couche,  
J'ouï qu'il me tient propos,  
Je le sens qui me touche :  
En labeur, et en requoi,  
Toujours il est près de moi.

Je ne vois autre object  
Pour beau qui se présente,  
A qui quo soit sujet  
Oncques mon cœur consente ;  
Et cette affection  
Je la sens en perfection.

Mets, chanson, ici fin  
A si triste complainte ;  
Dont sera le refrain :—  
"Amour vrai et non feinte,  
Par la séparation  
Il n'aura diminution!"

The next specimen of Mary's poetical talents was called forth on the following occasion. On the 21st of July, 1561, the young Queen of Scots left Paris for her native city. She was attended to Calais by a long train of the nobility of France, whence she embarked on the 25th. Mary was leaving a land endeared to her by a thousand grateful recollections; nor doubtless was her active spirit unclouded by omens of the future. She did not cease to direct her looks to the shore of France till the darkness interrupted her wistful gaze. At the dawn of day its coast was still in sight; she was upon deck before sunrise, and tradition informs us that then it was she composed the following song.

Adieu, plaisir pays de France !  
O ma patrie  
Lu plus cherie,  
Qui a nourri ma jeune enfance !

Adieu, France ! Adieu, mes beaux jours !  
La nef qui déjoint mes amours,  
N'a ici de moi que la moitié ;  
Une partie te reste ; elle est tienne :  
Je la fie à ton amitié,  
Pour que de l'autre il te souvienne !

The following particulars of Mary's reception in Edinburgh, may not be found misplaced :

Nothing could equal the enthusiasm of the people when they beheld the landing of their queen; "happy was he or she that might first get sight of her."

The stern John Knox relaxes for a moment from his severity, to record that "fires of joy were set forth at night, and a company of most honest men

Deep in my heart, and in mine eye,  
Thy portrait lives; this garb of woe,  
Which on my widow'd limbs you spy,  
And my pale features, sadly show,  
The semblance of the violet blue,  
Unhappy love's own kindred hue.

A prey to cares and anguish keen,  
No place my steps can long detain;  
Nor yet has any change of scene  
The power to chase away my pain ;  
My worst, my happiest state of mind  
In solitude alone I find.

Whether my footsteps sadly stray  
Through flowery mead, or shady bower;  
Whether at dawn of opening day,  
Or at the closing vesper hour ;  
That bitterest of all human ill,  
The grief of absence, haunts me still.

If to the heavens my eyes I raise,  
His gentle smile will meet me there ;  
If on the floating clouds I gaze,  
They picture forth his features fair ;  
If on the stream I cast my eye  
In crystal here'd he seems to lie.

When evening with her shades is near,  
And when I seek my couch of rest,  
In dreams his well-known voice I hear,  
My hand in his is gently press'd.  
In busy day, in hours of rest,  
His image ever fills my breast.

However fair, however bright,  
No other object charms me now,  
It wakes no feeling of delight,  
It cannot claim my bosom's vow.  
The deep affection that I bear  
To him, will have no rival there.

But hush, my song! no more complain ;  
The sadly-soothing lay give o'er ;  
The grief that knows not how to feign,  
Shall still this simple burden pour :—  
"Two hearts to true love fondly plighted  
Can by no time be disunited!"

Thou pleasant land of France, farewell!  
Cherish'd with love  
All lands above,  
Nurse of my infancy, farewell!

Dear France, and happier days, adieu !  
The sail that wafts me far from you,  
Bears but my half away, the rest  
Thine own, and thine alone shall be :  
This of its faith the pledge and test—  
To love and to remember thee !

with instruments of music, and with musicians, gave their salutations at her chamber window. The melody as she alleged, pleased her well, and she wished the same to be continued some nights after, with great diligence." Such is Knox's account of the matter; but as tastes differ, let us listen to a Frenchman's description of the scene. "When the queen landed," says the lively Brantome, "she had to go on horse-

back, and her ladies and lords on the miserable hackneys of the country, harnessed in the wretchedest manner. At such an equipage she began to be sad, exclaiming : "These are not the handsome housings of France, nor this the pomp to which I have been accustomed: but I must have patience!" But what was worse, in the evening, at the Abbey of Edinburgh, when she was about to go to rest, there came five or six hundred raggamuffins of the city, saluting her ears with some dozens of wretched fiddles, and of those small squeaking rebecks with which this country is infested, and began singing psalms, as badly and discordantly as could be. Heh! what music! and what a method of lulling her to repose after her fatigues!"

We have also "A New Year's Gift to Queen Mary, when she first came home;" it is from the pen of Walter Scott, a contemporary poet, and from a volume of the greatest rarity.

Unfortunately, few of these good wishes were destined to be realized by the youthful queen, and least of all the blessing of "a good man," as was seen in the sequel of her unhappy alliance with Lord Darnley, "the long, lank, and spoiled boy," as Elizabeth termed him, with all that ill blood which the mention of any one's marriage was sure to raise in the bosom of the Virgin Queen.

On a thousand trying occasions, Mary had evinced an energy of character which no reverses could daunt; nor did it quail before twenty long years of painful and monotonous captivity. Yet where is the heart but has its moments of despondency, and doubtless in one of these the following sonnet was penned.

Que suis-jo, holas! Et de quoi sort la vie?  
Je ne suis hors q'un corps privé de cœur;  
Un ombre vain, un objet de malheur,  
Qui n'a plus rien que de mourir en vie.  
Plus ne portez, O ennemis, d'envie,  
A qui n'a plus l'esprit à la grandeur.  
Je me consomme d'excessive douleur;  
Votre ire en bref se verra assouvio.  
E vous, amis, qui m'avez tenu chère,  
Souvenez vous que sans cœur, sans santé,  
Je ne saurois aucun hon œuvre faire.  
Souhaitez donc fin de calamité;  
Et que ci-bas étant assez punie,  
J'aye ma part en la joie infinie.

On the eve of her execution, Mary composed the following rhythmical prayer, the fervour and unction of which penetrate to every heart.

O Dominus Deus,  
Speravi in Te;  
O care mi Jesu,  
Nunc libera me.  
In dorâ catenâ,  
In miserâ pœnâ,  
Desidero Te!

Languendo, gemendo,  
Et genuflectendo,  
Adoro, imploro  
Ut liberes me!

Welcome, illustrious Lady, and our Queen,  
Welcome our lion with the flower de lyce,  
Welcome our thistle with the Lorraine green;  
Welcome our pleasant Princess, most of price.  
Welcome our gem, and joyful genetrix;  
Welcome, the bell of Albion to bear:  
God give thee grace against this good new year!

This good new year, we hope, with grace of God,  
Shall be of peace, tranquillity, and rest;  
This year shall right and reason rule the rod,  
Which so long season have been sore oppress,  
This year firm faith shall freely be confess,  
And all erroneous questions put arrear:  
God give thee grace against this good new year!

This year shall there be embassies, with strife  
For marriage, both from prince, dukes, and kings;  
This year, within thy region all be rife  
With riches, raiment, and all royal things;  
This year both blytheness and abundance brings;  
Navies of ships through all our seas shall peer,  
Against thy Grace get a gude man this year!

Alas! what am I?—What avails my life?  
A wretched cors[e] of soul bereft am I;  
A shadow vain, a thing with sorrows rife,  
With naught in life left for me but to die.  
Foes to my greatness, let your envy rest,  
The false world's greatness has no charms for me;  
Consum'd by grief, by heavy ills oppress'd,  
The oppressor soon shall gain the victory.

Ye friends! to whose remembrance I am dear,  
No strength to aid you or your cause have I,  
Cease then to shed the unavailing tear,  
I have not fear'd to live, nor dread to die,  
Perchance the pain that I have suffer'd here,  
May win me more of bliss through God's eternal year.

O my Lord and my God,  
All my hopes are in Thee;  
In my need, dearest Jesu,  
O succour Thou me!  
'Midst fettters deep-galling,  
'Midst ills deep-enthraling,  
My heart yearns for Thee!

While in anguish I languish,  
Thus kneeling before Thee,  
I adore, I implore Thee  
In my need succour me!